DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 341 885 CG 023 980

AUTHOR Tang, Thomas Li-Ping
TITLE A Factor Analytic Study of the Protestant Work Ethic.
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Southwestern Psychological Association (37th, New Orleans, LA, April 11-13, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Factor Analysis; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Medical Students; *Work Ethic
IDENTIFIERS *Taiwan

ABSTRACT

It has been suggested that the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) is a multidimensional concept. The concept of PWE has been examined in many different samples and societies. Very little research has been done concerning the factor structure of the PWE scale in a Chinese sample. This study examined the factor structure of the PWE scale in a sample of medical students (N=115) in Taiwan. The 19-item PWE scale was administered to these students. The subjects were asked to rate each item on a 7-point scale. Data were subjected to principal components factor analysis. Four factors were identified: hard work, internal motive, asceticism, and leisure. The factors of hard work, asceticism, and leisure were closely related to three factors revealed in Furham's previous research. However, factors such as religion and morality and independence from others were not found in this study. This is probably caused by the fact that seven measures of the PWE were used in Furham's research and only one measure was used in this study. Future research may compare the endorsement of the PWE in different groups and populations in the same or different cultures or societies. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED341885

A Factor Analytic Study of The Protestant Work Ethic

Thomas Li-Ping Tang

Middle Tennessee State University

Running head: PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Thomas Li-Ping Tang

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

This paper was presented at the 37th Annual Convention of the Southwestern Psychological Association, April, 1991, New Orleans, LA.

Address all correspondence to Thomas Li-Ping Tang, Box 516, Department of Management and Marketing, College of Business, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN 37132.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

A total of 115 first-year medical school students at National Taiwan University completed the 19-item Protestant Work Ethic scale (Mirels & Garrett, 1971). A 7-point scale was employed. Data from these 115 subjects were analyzed using factor analysis. Four factors are identified: Hard Work, Internal Motive, Asceticism, and Leisure.

A Factor Analytic Study of The Protestant Work Ethic

Furnham (1990) stated that one of the few theories to span nearly all of the social sciences (anthropology, economics, psychology, and sociology) has been Weber's (1958) theory of the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) accounting for the origin of capitalism. McClelland (1961) introduced Weber's theory into psychology by examining the link between Protestantism and capitalism.

It has been suggested that the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) is a multidimensional concept. Recently, Furnham (1990) compared and contrasted seven different measures of the PWE and found five readily interpretable factors: (1) respect for, admiration of, and willingness to take part in hard work, (2) against leisure, (3) religion and morality, (4) independence from others, and (5) asceticism, the damages of having too much time and money.

Moreover, the concept of PWE has been examined in many different samples and societies. For example, the PWE has been investigated in studies using subjects from Taiwan, Republic of China (Ma, 1986; Ma & Smith, 1985; Tang, 1990; Tang & Baumeister, 1984), Hong Kong (Ma, 1987), Malaysia (Furnham & Muhiudeen, 1984), New Zealand (Poulton & Ng, 1988), East African Quaker (Munroe & Munroe, 1986), Afro-Americans and Afro-Caribbeans (Gonsalves & Bernard, 1983), white males in South African (Bluen & Barling, 1983), Great Britain (Furnham, 1984a, 1984b, 1989; Furnham & Muhiudeen, 1984), and United States (Greenberg, 1977, 1978; Tang, 1989; Tang & Baumeister, 1984).

Very little research has been done concerning the factor structure of a PWE scale in a Chinese sample. The major purpose of the present study was to examine the factor structure of the PWE scale developed by Mirels and Garrett (1971) in a sample of medical school students in Taiwan, Republic of China.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 115 first-year medical school students at National Taiwan University (NTU), Taiwan, Republic of China. Since NTU offers a 7-year medical program, these first-year medical school students' status is very similar to that of college freshmen at NTU. These medical school students were considered as hard working and intelligent in the college student population. These subjects were in a general psychology class and volunteered for the present study.

Measure

The 19-item PWE scale (Mirels & Garrett, 1971) was administered to these students. The subjects were asked to rate each item on a 7-point scale. The translation of the original English version of the questionnaire into the Chinese was completed by conducting a multistage translation-back translation procedure suggested in the literature. The translation process was done by the author and two other psychologists fluent in both Chinese and English. This scale has inter-cultural equivalence and has been used in several studies (Tang, 1990; Tang & Baumeister, 1984).

Results

Data from 115 students were subjected to a principal components factor analysis. Due to the small sample size, items with a factor loading of .45 or greater on a factor were selected. Using a criterion of eigenvalues greater than one, followed by the varimax rotation, and a scree-test, four factors were identified. Table 1 shows the factors and the factor loadings of these items.

Insert Table 1 about here

Factor 1 can be labeled as Hard Work. A total of 18.8% of the variance can be explained by these four items of this factor. Factor 2 reflected individuals' Internal Motive (10.1% of the variance, 2 items). Factor 3 was related to individuals' Asceticism (9.2% of the variance, 4 items). Finally, Factor 4 revealed people's attitudes toward Leisure (7.4% of the variance, 3 items). A total of 13 items (out of 19 items) was included in these four factors. The total amount of variance explained was 45.5%.

Discussion

The results of the present study support Furnham's (1990) findings. More specifically, the factors identified in the present study such as Hard Work, Asceticism, and Leisure are closely related to the three factors revealed in Furnham's (1990) study. It is interesting to know that the Leisure attitude is a separate factor in the Protestant Work Ethic scale. The present

research supports the notion that pro-leisure is not the opposite of pro-work.

However, factors such as religion and morality and independence from others (cf. Furnham, 1990) are not found in the present study. This is probably caused by the fact that seven measures of the PWE are used in Furnham's (1990) study and only one measure is used in the present research.

The present study is conducted based on a sample of medical school students in Taiwan, Republic of China, whereas Furnham's study is conducted using native English speaking subjects. Although the subjects are from two different societies, similar results are found. Future research may compare the endorsement of the Protestant Work Ethic in different groups and populations in the same or different culture or society (e.g., Ma, 1986; Tang & Baumeister, 1984). The present author agrees with Furnham (1990) that "there remains considerable evidence that the PWE is alive and well" (p. 397).

References

Bluen, S. D., & Barling, J. (1983). Work values in white South African males. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 14 (3), 329-335.

Furnham, A. (1984a). The Protestant work ethic: A review of the psychological literature. European Journal of Social Psychology, 14, 87-104.

Furnham, A. (1984b). Work values and belief in Britain. Journal of Occupational Behavior, 5, 281-291.

Furnham, A. (1989). The Protestant work ethic: The psychology of work beliefs and values. London: Routledge.

Furnham, A. (1990). A content, correlational, and factor analytic study of seven questionnaire measures of the Protestant work ethic. Human Relations, 43 (4), 383-399.

Furnham, A., & Muhiudeen, C. (1984). The Protestant work ethic in Britain and Malaysia. Journal of Social Psychology, 122, 157-161.

Gonsalves, S. V., & Bernard, G. A. (1983). The relationship between the Protestant ethic and social class for Afro-Caribbeans and Afro-Americans. Psychological Reports, 53, 645-646.

Greenberg, J. (1977). The Protestant work ethic and reactions to negative performance evaluations on a laboratory task. Journal of Applied Psychology, 62, 682-690.

Greenberg, J. (1978). Equity, equality, and the Protestant ethic: Allocating rewards following fair and unfair competition. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 14,

217-226.

Ma, L. C. (1986). The Protestant ethic among Taiwanese college students. Journal of Psychology, 120 (3), 219-224.

Ma, L. C. (1987). The Protestant ethic among college students in two Chinese societies. Sociological Spectrum, 7, 45-59.

Ma, L. C., & Smith, K. (1985). Individual and social correlates of the just world belief: A study of Taiwanese college students. Psychological Reports, 57, 35-38.

McClelland, D. (1961). The achieving society. New York: Van Nostrand.

Mirels, H., & Garrett, J. (1971). Protestant ethic as a personality variable. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 36, 40-44.

Munroe, R. L., & Munroe, R. H. (1986). Weber's Protestant ethic revisited: An African case. Journal of Psychology, 120 (5), 447-456.

Poulton, R. G., & Ng, S. H. (1988). Relationships between Protestant work ethic and work effort in a field setting. Applied Psychology: An International Review, 37 (3), 227-233.

Tang, T. L. P. (1989). Effects of work ethic and task labels on task preference. Journal of Psychology, 123 (5), 429-438.

Tang, T. L. P. (1990). Factors affecting intrinsic motivation among university students in Taiwan. Journal of Social Psychology, 130 (2), 219-230.

Tang, T. L. P., & Baumeister, R. F. (1984). Effects of personal values, perceived surveillance, and task labels on task preference: The ideology of turning play into work. Journal of Applied Psychology, 69 (1), 99-105.

Weber, M. (1958). The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. (T. Parsons, Trans.). New York: Scribners. (Original work published 1904-1905).

Table 1
Factor loadings for the Protestant Work Ethic Scale

Item	Loading
Factor 1: Hard Work	(18.8%)
6. Most people who don't succeed in life are just plain lazy.	.75
7. The self-made man is likely to be more ethical than the man born to wealth.	.62
11. People who fail at a job have usually not tried hard enough.	.57
5. The most difficult college courses usually turn out to be the most rewarding.	.55
Factor 2: Internal Motive	(10.1%)
18. I feel uneasy when there is little work for me to do.	.81
19. A distaste for hard work usually reflects a weakness of character.	.78
Factor 3: Asceticism	(9.2%)
3. Money acquired easily (e.g., through gambling or speculation) is usually spent unwisely.	.72
1. Most people spend too much time in unprofitable amusement.	.65
8. I often feel I would be more successful if I sacrificed certain pleasures.	.56
17. If one works hard enough he is likely to make a a good life for himself.	.54
Factor 4: Leisure	(7.4%)
15. Life would be more meaningful if we had more leisure time.	.83
9. People should have more leisure time to spend in relaxation.	.60
10. Any man who is able and willing to work hard has a good chance of succeeding.	.51

Note. The amount of variance explained is presented in parentheses.